



**Preparing Children "4"
Lifelong Learning**

**Operating Guidelines for
First Class:
Alabama's Voluntary
Pre-Kindergarten
Programs
2010-2011**

Alabama Department of Children's Affairs

Office of School Readiness

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OPERATION AND SERVICES

General Program Operations and Services Information

1.1 Purpose

The purpose of First Class is to provide full day (at least 6.5 hours/day), five days per week, and 180 days per year of appropriate children's program for eligible four year olds.

1.2 Dates of Service

The First Class program shall operate within the dates stated in your contract. All programs must begin on or before September 1. All 18 children must be enrolled by Sept. 30. Programs with less than full enrollment will not receive first disbursements until full enrollment is obtained.

1.3 Task Force

Each community must form a collaborative task force to guide the Pre-Kindergarten program. The members of this group will plan for and contribute to the collaboration of community resources to provide a high quality program. Representatives of the local Departments of Human Resources, Public Health, Rehabilitation Services, School System (i.e. kindergarten teachers, early intervention specialist), Head Start program, Family Resource Center, Children's Policy Council, Chambers of Commerce, any other agency that serves families and children, and parents, should be included. The Task Force should meet **at least once per quarter, and must include items on the meeting agenda that relate to Pre-K. Programs that do not convene task forces at least 3 times per year will be fined \$500 per meeting, for a total fine of \$1,500 for the year.**

1.4 Mentors

When possible, each site should serve as a mentor to other sites that provide services to 4-year-olds (e.g., Head Start, private child care) in close proximity to site location. Mentorship involves sharing knowledge and information regarding best pre-k practices, sharing training opportunities, and allowing and/or conducting requested site visits for coaching and classroom recommendations.

Child/Family Eligibility

2.1 Age Requirement

Children must be **four years of age** on or before September 1, based on acceptable documentation, such as birth certificates, passports, official medical documents, or official documents from other countries. Children who are 5 years of age and are eligible for Kindergarten **may not** enroll in Alabama's First Class Pre-Kindergarten program.

Upon approval by OSR, children who are 3 and turn four after Sept. 1 may enroll in the program during **January** of the next academic year. These children may be automatically enrolled in the First Class Pre-K program the following academic year if they are not eligible for Kindergarten.

Note: Children must be toilet trained upon entering the program, unless a medical condition exists that is documented by the child's physician.

2.2 Residency Requirement

The child must be an Alabama resident and maintain residency while enrolled. For purposes of this program Alabama resident is defined as a child who resides in the state of Alabama, with proof of residence required (e.g. current utility bill).

2.3 Parent Requirement

Parents/Guardians must agree to abide by the terms listed in the Parent Contract (see Appendix B).

Enrollment

3.1 Open Enrollment

Enrollment for the program must be open and nondiscriminatory. There must be a wide distribution of registration notice in English and/or Spanish. Notice for enrollment **MUST** be posted one month in advance of enrollment date in locations such as health departments, Children Policy Council meetings, and newspapers. Enrollment notices **MUST** include: (a) date, time, and location, of registration, (b) nondiscriminatory and equal opportunity statements, and (c) selection procedure to be used. Enrollment **MUST** be based on lottery, promotion, or program assessments (e.g. DIAL 3). Children cannot be denied participation on the basis of income, race, color, or national origin (Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964); sex (TITLE IX of the Educational Amendments of 1972 and Title 11 of the Vocational Education Amendments of 1976); or disability (Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and The Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990) in educational programs.

If selection by lottery is used for enrollment, the date, time, and location of the drawing should be advertised and opened to the community. The enrollment of 18 children will be reduced when children with special needs are selected or identified. Enrollment waivers must be submitted to the OSR by **September 30**.

Recruitment for the classroom should continue throughout the year in order to maintain enrollment and a healthy wait list. Children who drop from the program after **April 1** do not have to be replaced.

3.2 Waiting Lists

A waiting list must be maintained at the site for all children who complete a registration form but are not attending the program due to a lack of space. The information maintained should include the first and last legal name of the child, gender, date of birth, parent name and contact information (see Appendix J). Waiting lists will be reviewed on site by OSR staff.

3.3 Reasons for Dismissal of a Child from the Program

Once a child has been enrolled, he or she cannot be dismissed from First Class UNLESS it is determined that he/she (1) is not benefiting from the program, (2) is chronically disruptive, (3) causes harm to himself /herself or others via biting and hitting, (4) is excessively absent or tardy (i.e. five consecutive days without a doctor's excuse), **and/or (5) the parent does not complete the mandatory parent/family involvement hours (i.e. 6) by December.** This determination can be made through information gathered by interventions to help the child benefit from the program, documentation of ongoing communication and involvement of parents, and other program staff observations (i.e. local school system special education). **Alternative forms of parental involvement may be accepted with prior approval from the assigned OSR Technical Assistant.**

Parents must sign a NOTICE OF RECEIPT of the First Class Code of Student Behavior upon enrollment and be notified of potential dismissal of their child from the program via a written warning (Appendix C). Second offenses must be addressed by the local Pre-K Administration and parent during a conference, during which the parent will be notified of the consequences of subsequent child behaviors. Third offenses will result in dismissal of the child from the program. However, documentation of ALL actions regarding student behavior must be sent to the Office of School Readiness for approval PRIOR TO dismissal.

It is the intent of OSR that NO CHILD is expelled or released from the First Class program unless ABSOLUTELY NECESSARY.

For special needs children, dismissal will be handled through the special education department of the local school system.

3.4 Procedures for Dismissal

Children who are not benefiting from the program, are chronically disruptive, cause harm to themselves and/or others, are excessively absent or tardy (*i.e. absent for five consecutive days, without a medical or reasonable explanation*), **and/or have parents/family members who do not complete the mandatory family involvement hours by the designated time** should be referred to the program director. A meeting with the parent

should occur in order to determine the reasons for the problem and to identify ways to resolve the problem. Inability to resolve the problem after documented interventions should be referred in writing to the Office of School Readiness.

Note: Children for who any of the above offenses are true can be removed from the roster. The Office of School Readiness must be notified in writing that such action has been taken immediately upon removal.

3.5 **Health Services**

Upon admission into First Class, the Pre-Kindergarten provider shall ensure that evidence of age-appropriate, up-to-date immunizations or signed religious beliefs affidavit against such immunizations is maintained locally for each child. Physical Examination Forms (Appendix M) are due prior to enrollment. Annual Health Screening Records (Appendix N) are due within 45 days of enrollment. Both the Physical Examination Form and Health Screening Record must be kept on site for all children.

Health Screenings are facilitated by Pre-K programs. It is the responsibility of First Class Pre-K programs to bring in trained professionals to conduct the screenings. Information on the child's physical examination form **MAY NOT** be used to complete the child's health screening form.

Children who are already receiving specialized services (i.e. vision, dental) **are not** required to participate in screenings facilitated by First Class. Children who begin First Class **after** September 30 must have physical examinations and health screenings completed **within 45 days** of enrollment.

First Class Pre-K providers must adhere to state licensing standards and federal and/or state law when administering medication to children (e.g. the Baby Douglas Law).

3.6 **Children with Disabilities**

A child who is eligible for the First Class program and is identified as eligible for special education and/or related services under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) shall not be denied access to the program. Appropriate special education, the child's Individualized Education Program (IEP), and recommendations of the placement committee will determine related services placement. **Unidentified** children with special needs will be referred **to the local LEA (local education agency) to be considered for services**. For contact information to local special education coordinators contact the Alabama State Department of Education at www.alsde.edu or 334-242-9700. First Class teachers should seek to be on classroom children's IEP committees and obtain copies of the children's IEP in order to incorporate suggestions into class instruction.

When the Pre-Kindergarten provider, along with the parent, refers a child suspected of having disabilities to the local school system, the referral request must be submitted to the special education program in the public school system in which the child resides. Note: **Dual enrollment in public school system preschool disabilities classes and Alabama Pre-Kindergarten programs is acceptable.**

Instructional Services/Curriculum

4.1 Curriculum

The Pre-Kindergarten provider shall present a complete educational program that is age appropriate and in accordance with the Alabama Performance Standards for 4-Year-Olds. Additionally all providers shall use OSR approved approaches and scientifically based curricula (Appendix U).

4.2 Record Keeping

First Class Pre-K Programs are expected to complete, submit, and file all documents identified by OSR. **Copies of all First Class documents and records, for each program year, should be retained on site for three (3) years following the final financial report, for that year.**

Forms to be **Submitted On-Line:**

1. Child Demographic Information
2. Child Physical Examination
3. Eligibility for TANF Services
4. End-of-Year Report
5. End-of-Year Teacher Training Verification
6. Site Demographic Information
7. Standardized Site Budget
8. Student Health Screening Record
9. Teacher Demographic Information

Forms to be **Filed On-Site:**

1. Child Wait List
2. Ages and Stages Questionnaire
3. Family Enrichment Sign-In Sheet
4. List of Suggested Parent Workshops
5. Log of Parent Involvement/Enrichment Hours
6. Mid-Year Teacher Training Verification
7. New Child Checklist
8. **OSR Equipment Inventory**
9. Parent Conference Verification

10. Parent Contract
11. Parent Orientation Verification
12. Parent Orientation Sign-In
13. Pre-K Code of Student Behavior
14. Required List of Equipment, Materials, & Supplies
15. Supply Purchase List
16. Task Force Meeting Verification
17. Task Force Sign-In
18. Timeline for Submission of Paperwork

Forms to be **Mailed to OSR:**

1. Child Physical Examination Forms
2. Criminal Background Checks (*if applicable; see section 9.1*)
3. Eligibility for TANF Services
4. Parent Contracts
5. Pictures, publications, newspaper clippings, etc.
6. Student Health Screening Records

Note: The Pre-Kindergarten provider must keep copies of all documents on file. For a list of documents needed for children who enroll anytime after Sept. 1, please see Appendix KK (New Student Checklist).

*Note: **Failure to submit and maintain the reports listed above will result in withholding of funds.** Continued failure to submit reports on time (i.e. more than once) will result in discontinuation of the First Class grant. Please see Timeline for OSR Pre-Kindergarten Sites for comprehensive list of forms and due dates (Appendix A).*

4.3 Parent Participation

Encourage parents or other family members to volunteer in the Pre-Kindergarten classroom and to attend Family Enrichment Workshops. Families must participate in a total of twelve (12) hours of **participation** during the program year. Of the required twelve hours, parents (**or other family members**) must attend at least **6** enrichment workshops and volunteer for at least **6** hours in the classroom (ex. helping with field trips, reading to children or attending special programs). All providers should offer at least twelve hours of planned enrichment activities and notify parents at least one month in advance of all planned activities. Documentation of workshop hours is required by using the *Parent/Family Enrichment Verification* (Appendix Q) and *Parent/Family Enrichment Sign-In Sheet* (Appendix R). Volunteer hours should be documented on the *Individual Parent/Family Volunteer Hour Log* (Appendix S). **All forms should be kept on site to document that parents/families are meeting the 6 enrichment plus 6 volunteer hour requirements.** A compilation of hours completed by the family

may be recorded on the *Compilation of Family Enrichment/Volunteer Hours Form* (Appendix LL).

Programs should submit a list of planned parent activities for the year to OSR by October 1.

At least two individual conferences per year between the lead teacher and parent/guardian, is expected and documented in each child's on-site file by use of the *Parent Conference Verification Form* (Appendix P). At the beginning of each year, an orientation meeting will be required. Documentation of parent orientation is required using the *Parent Orientation Verification Form* (Appendix H) and *Parent Orientation Sign-In Sheet* (Appendix I).

Note: Parents who DO NOT fulfill the requirements of the Parent Contract will have his/her child removed from the Pre-K Program (see Parent Contract-Appendix B). However, parents will receive a warning and be given time to comply prior to the child's dismissal subject to the discretion of the local Pre-K program director. Written documentation of a parent's non-compliance must be sent to the Office of School Readiness prior to dismissal.

4.4 Student Discipline

No employee shall use any form of corporal punishment (which includes but is not limited to paddling, striking, pulling, pushing, placing hands on, or hitting) as a method of discipline in the First Class program. No use of time-out will be allowed. Examples of appropriate practices include: redirection, encouragement, problem solving, effective planning, smooth and engaging transitions.

4.5 Transition Activities

All First Class sites **MUST** engage in the following activities in order to help the children experience smooth transitions from Pre-Kindergarten to Kindergarten:

- Take the class on a field trip to a local elementary school (if your *classroom* is not located in a public school) and familiarize the class with the school's environment.
- Share transition calendars with each First Class parent that includes important dates leading up to kindergarten registration and lists of recommended reading for children prior to kindergarten.

Other recommended activities are:

- Ask a local kindergarten teacher to facilitate a workshop for parents on getting their children ready for kindergarten.
- Provide parents with a list of recommended commercial and homemade materials that they can use at home to support learning.

- Ask kindergarten children who were in the First Class program last year to come and read books to the new First Class students.
- **End-of-Year celebrations with Kindergarten teachers**
- Find out from each parent where his/her child will attend kindergarten at the end-of-the year and provide networking opportunities for parents whose children will be attending the same school next year
- Talk with local kindergarten teachers about their expectations for children when they start kindergarten.
- Share progress reports with your children's kindergarten teachers (*after* you have received parental consent).
- Partner with the local Head Start program to engage in transitioning initiatives from Pre-K to Kindergarten
- Meet regularly with elementary school staff to share observations, concerns, and ideas regarding Pre-K

Equipment, Materials, and Supplies

5.1 Maintenance

Pre-Kindergarten providers shall maintain appropriate equipment, materials, and supplies for each Pre-Kindergarten classroom. **Classroom furniture is required at the beginning of the school year.**

5.2 Purchase of Equipment, Materials, and Supplies

Purchase orders for all materials purchased with First Class funds must be submitted to the assigned OSR technical assistant. Any materials NOT listed in Appendix V and any purchase over \$500 must be **pre-approved** by the assigned technical assistant PRIOR to purchasing.

Note: Failure to obtain prior approval for materials not listed in Appendix V and/or over \$500, will result in withholding of funds.

5.3 Ownership of Equipment

After four consecutive years of operation, equipment, and non-consumable materials are the property of the First Class site. In the case of termination of the program prior to four years, either by the site or the OSR, equipment reverts to the OSR. Within four years, if a site decides not to accept the OSR grant, all accumulated non-consumable materials/equipment purchased with grant monies must be transferred to another OSR site in that county. Details regarding the transference of materials/equipment must be arranged between the previous First Class site and new First Class site, and monitored by the assigned technical assistant.

5.4 Continuation Programs

After all required equipment, materials and supplies are in place, programs may use OSR funds to purchase computer hardware and/or playground equipment with prior approval from the OSR technical assistant.

Delivery of Services

6.1 Classroom Delivery

Each classroom shall have:

- Licensed space for 18 children - 35 square feet per child **in one room** (45 square feet is recommended); 75 square feet per child on the playground
- Enrollment of 18 children; Waivers may be granted to Head Start programs for an enrollment of up to 20 children; Waivers may also be granted to programs for an enrollment of less than 18 children **if the children are diagnosed with severe disabilities** as defined by IDEA eligibility. However, official waiver forms (Appendix W) must be completed, faxed or mailed to the office, and officially approved by OSR prior to enrollment.
- Waiting list to fill any vacancies that may occur throughout the year
- Two adults (lead teacher, teacher assistant, and/or substitute) present at all times during the 6.5-hour day, with the exception of the rest time
- Children with special needs must have additional aides with them in the classroom if they require one-on-one individualized attention (in compliance with child's Individualized Education Plan-IEP)
- Approved equipment, materials, and supplies (Appendix V)
- Age appropriate, fenced-in, playground available each day. Other opportunities for outside activities are encouraged (ex. trike trail, green space, gardens, etc.)

6.2 Program Delivery

The Pre-Kindergarten program shall provide at least 6.5 hours of children's program, five days per week, 180 days per year for eligible four-year-old children. Written lesson plans are required.

Using the Alabama Performance Standards for 4-Year-Olds as a guide, lesson plans should allow flexible groupings and be based on age appropriate practices that include educational experiences in the areas of emergent literacy, emergent numeracy, creative arts, science and environmental education, technology, social and emotional development, approaches to learning, and physical health and development.

Programs should use information from child assessments to plan individualized instruction.

6.3 Orientation

An on-site orientation for all teaching and administrative staff and families shall be provided within 20 working days of commencement of Pre-Kindergarten services for children. See *Appendix DD* for suggested topics to cover during parent orientation.

6.4 Licensing

The facility must abide by minimum standards and hold a current license from the Department of Human Resources, (license not required for programs approved for exemption). Exempt programs must show proof of exemption. For licensing information contact www.dhr.state.al.us or child care services 334-242-1310.

6.5 Accreditation

If you are an accredited site, please send accreditation documentation to OSR 30 days after your program begins. The Office of School Readiness encourages all sites to pursue accreditation.

6.6 Substitutes

The First Class provider shall ensure that a substitute lead teacher and/or substitute teacher assistant is present and working when the regular teacher(s) are absent, whether due to illness, required training or personal leave, etc. Long-term substitutes (i.e., lead teacher on maternity leave or extended leave longer than 3 weeks) should meet lead teacher requirements. Each site is responsible for compensating all substitutes.

Note: Criminal background checks are required for all substitute teachers. Copies of background checks must be submitted to OSR for long-term substitutes.

6.7 Rest Time

In order to maximize activities, rest time should not exceed one hour per day except to address specific needs of individual children. During the one hour scheduled rest period a ratio of one adult providing direct supervision to 18 children is acceptable. Teachers may only use this time for planning or teacher breaks. *ALL First Class Pre-K Programs MUST provide rest time and use cots during rest time rather than mats for the children (in compliance with DHR Minimum Standards).*

6.8 Other Program Components

Lunch, snacks, rest and supervised outdoor play are part of the First Class program. Breakfast may be included at the discretion of the provider, but should be offered prior to initiation of the 6.5-hour day.

Note: Breakfast as part of the children's program (i.e., a language development time, a center-time activity, etc.) is permissible. No part of the day may be religious in nature.

A moment of silence is acceptable. Activities religious in nature must take place outside of the 6.5-hour school day.

6.9 Program/Staff Hours

The 6.5 hours of children's program shall begin no earlier than 7:30 a.m., with hours of operation as delineated in the original approved application.

The remaining 1-hour of the lead teacher and teacher assistant's 7.5-hour funded day should be used for a variety of First Class program activities, such as parent conferences, meetings with Technical Assistant, planning, etc. The 7.5-hour day must be solely dedicated to state Pre-Kindergarten operations.

6.10 Transportation

Transportation services are not provided by OSR. However, individual sites that choose to provide transportation must adhere to local transportation guidelines, laws, and DHR Minimum Standards.

6.11 Extended Day (Before and After School Care)

The Office of School Readiness does not require or provide extended day services. Extended day services for Pre-Kindergarten children may be provided at the parent's expense. Income eligible families may receive services through the Department of Human Resources, Childcare Management Agency office or the Department of Family and Children's Services subsidized childcare.

6.12 Assessment

The Pre-Kindergarten provider shall ensure that child assessment procedures reflect appropriate practices for young children. Assessments should incorporate information from multiple sources, including health records, parental input, and child observations. Any assessment instruments used should be valid, reliable, culturally sensitive, and individually administered by trained personnel.

Some specific child assessment instruments will be required by OSR for standard assessment.

Note: Use of pass/fail criteria, report cards/variations of report cards, or letter grades are inappropriate practices.

6.13 Child Abuse and Neglect Investigations

The Pre-Kindergarten provider must notify OSR anytime there is an open abuse or neglect investigation involving the First Class classroom and resolution is completed. The OSR will temporarily suspend all First Class Programs that are suspended by DHR

for the length of time that it takes the program to be reinstated by DHR. For instructions on how to report instances of child abuse and neglect, see **Appendix MM**, *Alabama's Mandatory Child Abuse and Neglect Reporting Law*.

Program Fees

7.1 Children's Program Fees

All children must receive the same opportunities during the 6.5 hour program day. Fees may be charged, **but must** not exceed the amount noted for parents on the sliding scale chart that is based on family income (Appendix BB) No child may be denied access due to the family's inability to pay requested program fees. Sites may seek help from local task forces for scholarships and fundraising events.

Field trips are a part of the First Class program. At least 1 off- site field trip is required. More are *recommended*. Therefore, field trips made during the day must be free and available to all children. Pre-Kindergarten funds may be used to provide field trips or other appropriate activities for children. If classes such as computer, dance, and/or art are included in the 6.5 hour day, they must be free and available to all First Class children.

**** All First Class programs are expected to visit the state capitol each year, when called upon by the Office of School Readiness, to help ensure funding for the program.*

No additional fees, for anything other than meals, may be required of any child for the provision of First Class services (e.g., registration, uniforms, field trips, curriculum fees, classroom supplies). **Voluntary donations may be requested. However, no child may be denied participation if families do not give requested donations.**

Note: If the Pre-Kindergarten provider is not receiving parent fees, the provider may charge *meal fees* to children who do not qualify for free or reduced meal prices.

7.2 Extracurricular Activities

Families will choose whether or not to participate in extracurricular activities, such as school photographs, T-shirts, etc. Families may be charged fees for these extracurricular activities.

Note: If every First Class child is photographed, this activity may occur during the program day.

7.3 Fee Structure

Documentation that explains the fee structure for non-Pre-Kindergarten program days (holiday/vacation times) for children, transportation (optional) and/or food services shall be given to each family. Copies of this documentation should be kept on file.

7.4 Uniforms

Centers with uniform policies may request that parents dress children in uniforms. Program Directors are urged to provide uniforms for those who cannot afford them or work with community resources to secure uniforms.

7.5 Graduation

Graduation for four-year-old children is not an appropriate activity. More appropriate activities include, but are not limited to: a field day, an open house, family/child picnic, dinner, etc.

Office of School Readiness Technical Assistance

8.1 Technical Assistant Support

The Technical Assistant will work closely with directors, teachers and assistants throughout the year and will be available for consultation purposes regarding questions about the program, problems with maintaining enrollment expectations, approval of equipment/materials/supplies requests, training needs, and other assistance.

8.2 On-Site Evaluation

The Technical Assistant will conduct on-site monitoring and evaluate program progress during random visits throughout the year. During these visits assessments (e.g. Pre-K ELLCO) will be compiled by the Technical Assistant and records to be kept on site will be verified. Stipulations with time-lines and recommendations will be developed for each site. **Stipulations will require action by the designated time.** Recommendations are strongly advised for program improvement. Repeated violations of stipulations will be used to determine continuation of funding. A continuation of low scores on program assessments may result in a loss of funding.

Programs that continue to have unresolved programmatic problems or ongoing childcare licensing issues, despite technical assistance, are in danger of being defunded.

PERSONNEL AND TRAINING

General Personnel and Training Information

9.1 Criminal Background Checks

All First Class program personnel must have had a satisfactory criminal background check and fingerprinting, with documentation on file with the provider. Providers must forward a copy of approval **OR** the criminal background application to OSR 30 days after the program begins or the teacher(s) are hired. Criminal background checks are required of lead, Assistant, and substitute teachers (*see DHR minimum standards*) every four years. Criminal background checks will be kept at OSR for **4** years. **Proof of requested background checks** or clearance forms of all **new** staff hired within the four-year period is required within 30 days of employment.

Volunteer parents **MAY NOT** be left in the classroom unsupervised by classroom personnel. If First Class personnel are convicted of criminal behavior (**AFTER** employment in the First Class classroom), the grantee must inform OSR promptly.

9.2 Employees

All First Class program personnel are employees of the Pre-Kindergarten provider, not the State of Alabama. **First Class Pre-K personnel may not occupy more than one position during the 6.5 hour day (e.g. director and teacher; director and assistant teacher).**

Lead Teachers

10.1 Days of Service

All lead teachers are funded for 187 days of service (180 days of classroom instructional services and 7 days of pre/post planning and/or staff training).

Note: If a First Class provider requires teachers to work more than 187 days, the provider cannot use First Class program funds for this expense.

10.2 Age Requirement

All lead teachers must be at least 21 years of age or older.

10.3 Certification Requirements

Lead teachers must have at least one of the following:

- Human Environmental Science Degree with a concentration in Early Childhood Development or Child Development.

- Early Childhood Education degree (B.S., B.A., or M.A./M.S.) with/without teacher certification.
- Special Education degree with a minimum of 18 credit hours in early childhood/child development coursework, and teacher certification.
- Elementary Education degree with a minimum of 18 credit hours in Early Childhood/Child Development coursework, and teacher certification.

Note: Teacher certification is only required for teachers employed in public schools.

A waiver (no longer *than* 3 years) may be granted to a **site** whose lead teacher does not meet one of the above credentials if all of the following is true:

- The lead teacher has an Associate degree in Child Development
- The lead teacher is performing at acceptable levels, as noted by technical assistants' visits and reports.
- The lead teacher is actively working towards one of the above degree options (taking 9 credits per calendar year from a regionally accredited institution and making adequate grades).

In order to request a waiver, Pre-K programs must submit transcripts of potential lead teachers before they are hired. All requests for waivers must be submitted to OSR by September 30, 2010. Requests for waivers **will not** be accepted after this date.

Official transcripts for all **NEW** First Class teachers must be submitted to OSR no later than October 1, 2010. Experience and/or coursework for Elementary Certification must be submitted for approval before hiring.

Waivers for teachers are granted to sites for up to three years. A program that does not have qualified teachers in position after 3 years may be defunded. **Official transcripts should be submitted to OSR yearly in order to document progress toward degree or early childhood coursework.**

10.4 Lead Teacher Salary

Lead teacher salaries must be based upon the *OSR Teacher Salary Schedule* for non-public school teachers (see Appendix X), and upon the *State Department of Education Teacher Salary Schedule* for public school teachers (see Appendix Y).

Programs are responsible for paying teacher salaries out of local funds until First Class funds are distributed to the program.

Assistant Teachers

11.1 Days of Service

All teacher assistants are funded for 187 days of service (180 days of classroom instructional services and 7 days of pre/post planning and/or staff training).

Note: If a First Class provider requires teacher assistants to work more than 187 days, the provider cannot use First Class program funds for this expense.

11.2 Employment Requirements

A teacher assistant must meet all of the following minimum requirements:

- Be at least 19 years of age.
- Possess a high school diploma or GED.
- Possess a Child Development Associate Credential (CDA) OR at least 9 credit hours of college coursework in the field of Early Childhood Education or Child Development **from a regionally accredited institution**
- Possess appropriate experience (at least 12 *months*) working in early childhood or experience in other OSR approved settings.

A waiver (no longer *than* 3 years) may be granted to a site whose Assistant teacher does not meet one of the above credentials if both of the following is true:

- The assistant teacher is performing at acceptable levels, as noted by technical assistants' visits and reports.
- The assistant teacher is actively working towards one the above degree options.

In order to request a waiver, Pre-K programs must submit official transcripts of potential Assistant teachers **before** they are hired. All requests for waivers must be submitted by September 30, 2010. Requests for waivers **will not** be accepted after this date.

Official transcripts of college coursework **or** a copy of the Child Development Associate Credential for all **NEW** First Class Assistant teachers must be submitted to OSR no later than October 1, 2010. **Assistant teachers that had college coursework should take at least 1 course each program year. Official transcripts should be submitted yearly to document progress.**

11.3 Assistant Salary

A minimum salary for assistant teachers is indicated on the OSR Salary Scale (see Appendix X).

Programs are responsible for paying teacher salaries out of local funds until First Class funds are distributed to the program.

Training Requirements

12.1 Attendance at Training

All levels of administrative, teaching and support staff are required to attend training offered or approved by the Office of School Readiness. Teachers and assistants must attend a minimum of **15** hours of **OSR sponsored training** each year plus 15 additional hours of training offered by the local program, for a total of **30** training hours. “No shows” at any OSR sponsored training will be charged **\$500/site**. The **\$500/site** will be deducted from the next Pre-K payment. **Sites may not visit other First Class Pre-K programs to make up for missed OSR sponsored training. For an academic year, professional development must occur from July 1 to June 30 of the next year.**

*Note: Documentation of training hours must be kept on file by certificates of attendance. The OSR sponsored Pre-K Conference is mandatory training for all lead **and** Assistant teachers. **No-shows at the conference will be charged \$1,000/site.***

12.2 Importance of Training

In order to maintain quality-teaching standards, annual training is required for all staff directly associated with the First Class program. Technical Assistants will verify attendance of staff at training sessions. Failure of providers and their staff to participate in training during the school year will place their program in noncompliance and may jeopardize future funding.

12.3 Intent of Teacher Training

The Office of School Readiness offers multiple training opportunities for First Class teachers/assistants. This training is not designed or intended to prepare personnel to become Pre-Kindergarten teachers. Training is intended to increase the skills and knowledge of teaching staff already prepared to teach in the First Class program.

12.4 Training Reimbursement to Staff

The provider shall ensure that Pre-Kindergarten funds are used to pay for substitutes and costs associated with staff travel (subsistence, mileage, etc.) to all required state training sessions. In addition, the providers shall pay staff for attending all required OSR trainings and for all training expenses, within **30** days of training and/or upon receipt of invoices from teachers.

FUNDING

Contract Notification and Initial Budgets

13.1 Awarding of Contracts

Contracts will be awarded to First Class providers through a competitive process, subject to funding availability, previous program compliance (for continuation programs), and identified regional need. Programs are funded for 4 years based on the availability of funding and adherence to OSR recommendations and stipulations. **AFTER THE FOURTH YEAR**, programs will be required to complete a refunding application.

13.2 Notification and Contract Awards

All approved programs receive written notification.

13.3 Class Budgets

All classes must have 18 students in order to receive funding. Classes with less than 18 children are subject to probation (*unless an enrollment waiver is granted*) at the discretion of the Office of School Readiness. **Budgets for the upcoming year should be submitted to OSR no later than September 1 (see Appendix E).** All budgets should reflect how OSR funds will be used for program operation. If budgets exceed the grant amount, programs must indicate the amount of money utilized from other funding sources as match(e.g. tuition, Title I, Title IV).

13.4 Contract Signatory

The legal signatory for the program entity must sign the contract.

13.5 Disbursement of Funds

Funds to Pre-K programs will be disbursed in three equal payments, subject to the availability of funds and on receipt of completed paperwork. Anticipated disbursements of funds will begin in October, January, and June. First Class programs **cannot** wait until the first disbursement from OSR to pay lead and Assistant teacher salaries.

All OSR funds must be spent by September 30, 2011 or funds will be returned to the Office of School Readiness.

13.6 Budget Guidelines

Each program is expected to provide a 25% match (cash or in-kind). The following items may be included in your budget for OSR funds:

Administrative Time (no more than 6%)
Advertising
Consumable and Instructional Materials and Supplies
Classroom Maintenance
Computer Hardware (limited; must have approval from OSR)
Computer Support
Equipment (classroom furnishings; see Appendices L and V, First Class Operating Guidelines)*
Field Trips
Food
Home Visits (travel)
Health Services
Health Supplies
Insurance
Janitorial Supplies
Parent Programs/Involvement
Personnel - Salaries/Benefits for teacher and assistant
Playground Equipment
Postage
Safety Enhancement
Special Education Services
Substitutes
Training (including registration, travel and lodging)
Transportation
Travel
Utilities (maximum \$1,000)
Other (background checks, auditing, accounting)

- *All equipment over \$500.00 must be inventoried using Appendix T; inventories should be kept on site and reviewed by the technical assistant.*

The following items **MAY NOT** be included in your budget for OSR funds:

Transportation (except for field trips)
Vehicles
Construction
Video Equipment (televisions, VCRs, monitoring equipment)
Space Rent
Tuition for Children

Note: ALL budget changes that exceed 10% of a line item must be approved by the OSR.

NON-COMPLIANCE/DUE PROCESS

Failure to adhere to any of the above Operating Guidelines may result in a warning, probation, suspension, and/or defunding of the program. A work-plan will be given to programs placed on probation, and implementation of the work-plan will be supported by the technical assistant. If the program continues to be deficient, OSR can recommend that the program is suspended or defunded. A defunded program must wait one year to reapply for a First Class Pre-Kindergarten grant.

The decision of the OSR Director is final concerning defunding a program. However, a program that has been defunded may submit, in writing, a response to the deficiencies stated/outlined in the defunding letter.

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